

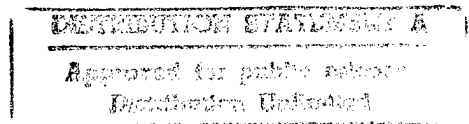
SENIOR SERVICE SCHOOL TIMING FOR AIR FORCE  
OFFICERS: A CULTURAL CHANGE

A Research Paper

Presented To

The Directorate of Research

Air Command and Staff College



In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements of ACSC

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## *Preface*

Military institutions worldwide have been in a dynamic period of transition since the end of the Cold War. The emerging world security environment, combined with shrinking defense budgets, demands that military professionals explore innovative ideas and challenge the way we operate. This is necessary to ensure our armed forces are embracing and practicing the most efficient and effective means possible.

The professional military education system, while one small part of the Air Force organization, stands out as an important area worthy of research and discussion. Equally important, this educational tool is used to shape the way our future leaders think and shrinking budgets force us to ensure they are cost effective. We have an obligation to challenge the processes within our organization and look for ways to improve them. In our case, the process we chose to study and hopefully improve is the selection process for Senior Service School and more specifically for Air War College. We believe we have met this challenge.

As with any project of this scope, this study could not have been undertaken without the support and assistance of many individuals. We would like to offer our sincere appreciation to Lt Gen Michael McGinty, Maj Gen D.B. Smith, Maj Gen W.B. Davitte, Brig Gen Susan Pamerleau, Col Norm Rathje, Col Walter Berg, Col John Speigel, Col Don Smith, Lt Col Lawton Duncan (Faculty Research Advisor), Lt Col Stef Eisen, Maj Pam McCollom, Maj Cathy Lovelady, Capt Gina Grosso, Capt William Hegedusich, and

Capt Dave McCormick. Their support, insight, and guidance were invaluable to the successful completion of this research project.



### *Abstract*

Initial study of the relationship of in-residence Air War College (AWC) completion to promotion success was accomplished in 1975, and subsequently updated in 1984. The focus of this study is to revalidate the promotion trend cited in the 1984 study and to examine the importance of attendance timing for Air Force officers to Senior Service School (SSS).

Sources used in preparation of this study includes officer cohort and promotion files for 1984-1995, as well as a review of officer utilization policy from the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC), Headquarters USAF, the Office for Colonel Matters, and AWC. Personal interviews and surveys were used to glean current issues, concerns, and recommendations from senior leaders and major command (MAJCOM) personnel officers throughout the Air Force.

Analysis of promotion statistics concludes that while the promotion rates among the Senior Service Schools are not at parity, they have leveled somewhat from the analysis done in the 1984 study. Additionally, this study discusses the current trend of sending more junior lieutenant colonels to SSS shortly after ISS completion and before they have had the opportunity to gain valuable leadership experience. These officers, their classmates, and the Air Force would be better served by modifying the SSS selection process to facilitate in-residence attendance later in an officer's career without negatively affecting promotion opportunities. The study recommends changes to the selection

process and strives to foster a cultural change within the Air Force to ensure SSS is viewed as a tool for developing future leaders and not as a square to be filled for promotion to colonel.

The study has a direct impact on the management of senior officer development and utilization in the Air Force for the remainder of this century and into the next.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

*The downsizing of the military forces us to continually evaluate how we operate and search for ways to do things smarter.* This study began as an update to two previous studies examining the promotion success of Air War College (AWC) graduates compared to the graduates of other Senior Service School (SSS) programs. The initial study was released in 1975 with a follow-up study in 1984. The National Defense University (NDU) programs, National War College (NWC) and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), were the benchmark programs against which AWC was measured. The 1975 study noted promotion selection rates to colonel for AWC graduates were lower than those for NDU graduates. Both studies called for continual monitoring of promotion rates in the SSS context and periodic reporting of the results. Chapter 2 updates the statistics as recommended by the 1984 study.

For this third study, the authors will consider a corollary issue: the timing of attendance to AWC for officers. The perceived trend, by both the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC) and AWC, is that members of AWC classes are becoming more junior and these officers are not bringing the “right” command and leadership experience to the school. Specifically, these less experienced officers are relatively new lieutenant colonels, or even frocked majors, and have not served as commanders or senior staff

members. Some critics argue that not testing lieutenant colonels in the crucible of command prior to in-residence attendance at SSS does not cultivate the desired results from the resident AWC curriculum. Air Force officers, junior to their other service peers who typically have command experience and more years of service, are not positioned to reap the full benefits of senior level professional military education. This study examines the selection process for lieutenant colonel in-residence attendance, notes some of the trends in the upcoming years, and makes recommendations for aging the lieutenant colonel groups selected for in-residence SSS.

Evaluating the school selection process, Chapter 3 provides a brief overview of the Army and Navy philosophies and processes as a comparison basis to the Air Force process. This review provides a bibliographic update for future study; the 1984 study noted a lack of writings regarding the SSS process. Chapter 4 describes the Air Force process, focusing on policy and mechanics. Discussing the SSS selection board procedures and instructions, Chapter 4 also covers the governing instructions. Chapter 5 discusses the AFPC perspective, AF/DP views, AWC concerns, and looks at how the major and joint commands work the selection process. Chapter 6 recommends several options to effect course corrections for the Air Force SSS selection process.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Promotions Update**

#### **Introduction**

A 1984 AWC research project entitled "Promotion Success of Resident Air War College Graduates" sparked this study. The 1984 study examined promotion trends of lieutenant colonel AWC graduates meeting in-the-zone colonel promotion boards. Conclusions of the 1984 study indicated promotion selection rates to colonel for AWC graduates approached promotion selection rates for Air Force graduates of other SSS programs, namely National War College (NWC) and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF).<sup>1</sup> The 1984 study updated an earlier 1975 study, where the promotion selection rates to colonel for AWC graduates were not as high as the selection rates for NWC and ICAF graduates.<sup>2</sup> Our promotion rate analysis begins where the 1984 study left off and ends with the most recent SSS class of 1995.

Table 2-1 details Air Force graduates of SSS by year and school attended.<sup>3</sup> NWC, ICAF, and AWC attendees are displayed in the first three rows. The row entitled "Other" is the sum total of attendees for those schools which have relatively few Air Force attendees: the Army War College, the Naval War College, the Harvard Fellowship Program, National Defense Fellowship, National War College-Foreign, US Marine Corps

War College, National Security Management Program, and any other SSS equivalent. Taken separately, the number of attendees to each of these programs is small, and disaggregate analysis is more sensitive to data differences.

**Table 2-1. Air Force Senior Service School Graduates**

| <b>CLASS YEAR</b> | <b>84</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>87</b> | <b>88</b> | <b>89</b> | <b>90</b> | <b>91</b> | <b>92</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>95</b> |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| NWC               | 42        | 42        | 41        | 42        | 43        | 40        | 41        | 43        | 44        | 44        | 42        | 38        |
| ICAF              | 51        | 51        | 56        | 55        | 54        | 52        | 54        | 54        | 53        | 51        | 52        | 51        |
| AWC               | 157       | 153       | 161       | 164       | 158       | 148       | 144       | 124       | 141       | 133       | 136       | 146       |
| OTHER             | 73        | 83        | 87        | 80        | 49        | 46        | 33        | 35        | 44        | 44        | 45        | 60        |
| TOTAL             | 323       | 329       | 345       | 341       | 304       | 286       | 272       | 256       | 282       | 272       | 275       | 295       |

**Source:** Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates (AFPC/DPSAA, Randolph AFB, TX, 7 December 1995).

Each chart column represents a class year and is totaled in the bottom row. The table represents a summary of SSS attendance over the time period 1984 through 1995. The distribution of Air Force officers between the schools remains fairly consistent throughout the subject time period.

Table 2-2 depicts the number of lieutenant colonels attending AWC by year and the promotion select rate for those in the promotion zone (IPZ) and below the promotion zone (BPZ) while in school.<sup>4</sup> The table shows for each class year of this study the lieutenant colonel population (row 1) and the number of lieutenant colonels IPZ to colonel (row 2). Row 3 displays the number of IPZ eligibles selected for promotion that year while in school. Row 4 shows the number of non-selected eligibles for each year. The in-school IPZ promotion rate (the number selected divided by the number eligible) is

in row 5. This chart shows overall promotion rates for IPZ individuals while in school to be relatively high.

**Table 2-2. Promotion to O-6 for AWC Students**

| <b>CLASS YEAR</b>       | <b>84</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>87</b> | <b>88</b> | <b>89</b> | <b>90</b> | <b>91</b> | <b>92</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>95</b> |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| LT COL POPULATION       | 78        | 28        | 28        | 40        | 53        | 53        | 82        | 68        | 36        | 57        | 110       | 111       |
| IPZ IN SCHOOL           | 22        | 1         | 3         | 3         | 0         | 1         | 5         | 23        | 1         | 1         | 40        | 27        |
| # SEL IPZ IN SCHOOL     | 22        | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         | 1         | 22        | 0         | 0         | 40        | 26        |
| # NON-SEL IPZ IN SCHOOL | 0         | 1         | 3         | 3         | 0         | 1         | 4         | 1         | 1         | 1         | 0         | 1         |
| IPZ SEL RATE IN SCHOOL  | 100%      | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 0%        | 20%       | 96%       | 0%        | 0%        | 100%      | 96%       |
| AF SELECT RATES         | 43.6%     | 43.5%     | 42.8%     | 43.5%     | 0%        | 44.1%     | 44.0%     | 45.0%     | 41.8%     | 41.6%     | 41.8%     | 41.9%     |
| BPZ IN SCHOOL           | 32        | 16        | 7         | 9         | 31        | 28        | 41        | 27        | 27        | 28        | 53        | 36        |
| # SEL BPZ IN SCHOOL     | 3         | 1         | 0         | 2         | 0         | 3         | 6         | 4         | 5         | 6         | 8         | 2         |

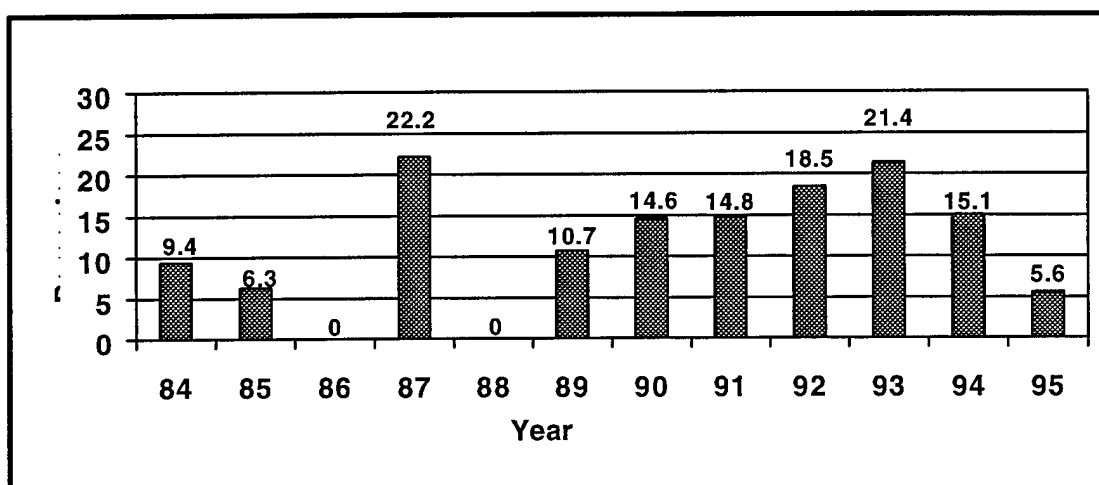
**Source:** Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates (AFPC/DPSAA, Randolph AFB, TX, 7 December 1995).

Despite Air Force policy, many lieutenant colonels IPZ to colonel still attend SSS. AFI 36-2301 states lieutenant colonel selects and lieutenant colonels are eligible to attend SSS "until considered in-the-promotion-zone for colonel."<sup>5</sup> The data shows 40 officers were selected to attend SSS while IPZ for colonel in 1994 and 27 were selected to attend in 1995. Possibly, this was the last opportunity for these officers to attend. The promotion selection rates to colonel for these recent IPZ attendees have been high, 100 percent and 96 percent respectively.

Table 2-2 also shows the number of BPZ selectees while in school. Table 2-3 provides a clearer indication of BPZ rates by class.<sup>6</sup> The trend lines show BPZ rates

increasing from 1989 through 1993. Although selection rates declined for 1994 and 1995, the rates still exceed the overall Air Force BPZ select rates to colonel (3.6% in 94; 3.7% in 95).<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2-3. BPZ In-School Selection Rate**



Source: TIG for LtCol Graduates from AWC (AFPC/DPSAA, Randolph AFB, TX, 1 April 1996).

**Table 2-4. IPZ Graduation +1 Year O-6 Selection**

| Year | NWC         |            | ICAF        |            | AWC         |            | OTHER       |            | TOTAL       |            |
|------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|      | <i>elig</i> | <i>sel</i> | <i>elig</i> | <i>sel</i> | <i>elig</i> | <i>sel</i> | <i>elig</i> | <i>sel</i> | <i>elig</i> | <i>sel</i> |
| 84   | 7           | 6          | 4           | 3          | 29          | 23         | 5           | 5          | 45          | 37         |
| 85   | 3           | 3          | 5           | 5          | 15          | 11         | 9           | 9          | 32          | 28         |
| 86   | 3           | 2          | 11          | 11         | 20          | 16         | 10          | 9          | 44          | 38         |
| 87   | 5           | 4          | 6           | 4          | 21          | 10         | 3           | 3          | 35          | 21         |
| 88   | 0           | 0          | 0           | 0          | 0           | 0          | 0           | 0          | 0           | 0          |
| 89   | 5           | 5          | 3           | 2          | 23          | 19         | 5           | 4          | 36          | 30         |
| 90   | 2           | 2          | 10          | 10         | 34          | 32         | 3           | 3          | 49          | 47         |
| 91   | 6           | 6          | 14          | 14         | 22          | 17         | 8           | 7          | 50          | 44         |
| 92   | 2           | 2          | 7           | 7          | 17          | 17         | 4           | 4          | 30          | 30         |
| 93   | 8           | 7          | 9           | 9          | 28          | 28         | 10          | 9          | 55          | 53         |
| 94   | 6           | 6          | 10          | 10         | 40          | 37         | 9           | 9          | 65          | 62         |

Source: Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates (AFPC/DPSAA, Randolph AFB, TX, 7 December 1995).

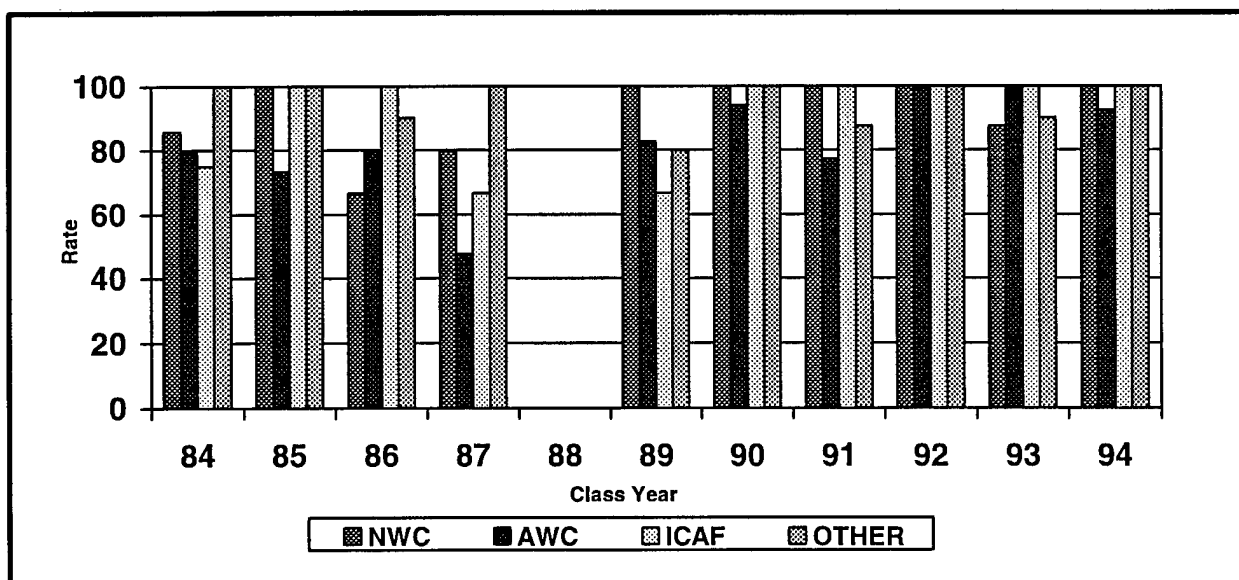
To measure the impact of SSS attendance, the study examined promotion select rates one year after graduation. Table 2-4 shows the promotion select rates to colonel for



graduates of each SSS program one year after graduation.<sup>8</sup> The 1984 study presented similar data. The lack of entries for 1988 is due to no colonel selection board that year.

Table 2-5 displays the comparison by school of the promotion rates for those IPZ eligibles at graduation plus one year. The 1984 study reported average selection rates for 1979-81 officers one year after graduation of 100 percent for NWC, 87.5 percent for ICAF, and 84.7 percent for AWC.<sup>9</sup> Average selection rates for 1984-94 were 91.5 percent for NWC, 94.9 percent for ICAF, and 84.3 percent for AWC.<sup>10</sup> The colonel selection rates for AWC graduates one year later approximated the rates reported earlier, while the NWC rate fell nine percentage points and the ICAF rate increased seven percentage points. The overall trend shows a leveling of the promotion select rates over the ten year period.

**Table 2-5. Comparison of IPZ Grad +1 O-6 Promotion Rates/School**



**Source:** Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates (AFPC/DPSAA, Randolph AFB, TX, 7 December 1995).

The preceding data analysis for this promotion update used historical data compiled from the AFPC personnel data system (PDS). Promotion selection rates for SSS graduates were used to indicate whether the Air Force is sending the "right" officers to PME. The method used here, although consistent with earlier studies, is incomplete and subject to error because database accuracy decreases over time. Re-creation of baseline data from several PDS resource files introduces opportunity for error. To counter this problem, post promotion board updates should be accomplished. AWC should work with AFPC promotions branch to monitor these trends. Nonetheless, the positive trends in the 1984 study hold today and the most recent data reflects the strength of these trends.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lt Cols James H. Brown, William B. Davitte, Kenneth E. Roth, "Promotion Success of Resident Air War College Graduates," Research Report no. AU-AWC-84-029 (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1984), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates, 1984-95, AFPC/DPSAA, 7 December 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*, 22 July 1994, 5.

<sup>6</sup> TIG for Lt Col Graduates from Air War College, AFPC/DPSAA, 1 April 1996. This study derived the number of BPZ eligible lieutenant colonels by examining time in grade (TIG) and extracting from the total the officers with two years or fewer TIG, as well as the IPZ officers. Total BPZ selects were divided by total BPZ eligibles to yield BPZ select percentages.

<sup>7</sup> Promotion Rate Data by Previous BPZ or In-Residence SSS Attendance, AFPC/DPSAA, 18 January 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates, 1984-95, AFPC/DPSAA, 7 December 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, et al., 27.

<sup>10</sup> Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates, 1984-95, AFPC/DPSAA, 7 December 1995.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Senior Service School Comparison**

Professional military education has been a cornerstone for military professional development since the mid 1800s. Moreover, as Defense Secretary Black wrote in 1980, SSS provides officers, whose experience has been largely operational or specialized, an opportunity to place their role as military officers into a broader and more balanced perspective.<sup>1</sup> The Air Force subscribes to this general tenet today and this chapter will discuss how the Air Force selects officers to receive this broader perspective. As a comparison, an initial look at the Army's and Navy's SSS selection processes, as well as a current update on the war college mission statements, selection criteria, and class composition follows. Reviewing the Army and Navy programs will aid in maintaining a big picture perspective and provide valuable insight into how the Air Force can improve its selection process. This approach should highlight the shortcomings of the other service processes so the Air Force can avoid the same pitfalls.

#### **Army War College**

The Army has done an excellent job of examining its war college goals and missions, providing an excellent historical source for this study. The primary mission of the US Army War College (USAWC) in 1976 was to prepare officers for senior leadership

positions in the Army, Defense, and related Departments and Agencies. The USAWC academic themes were: lead other professionals, work in the strategic environment, serve in joint and combined commands, direct Army and DOD systems, command at the operational level, and plan/operate theater/global forces.<sup>2</sup> The following provides basic eligibility criteria for officers to meet these goals 20 years ago. Each officer must have:

1. Completed a minimum of 15 years and not more than 23 years of service on 1 September of the year the course began
2. Served in the grade of lieutenant colonel or colonel at the time of entry into the War College
3. Successfully completed the Command and Staff Level College, equivalent Service College, or an equivalent foreign college

In 1972, the average student in USAWC was either a lieutenant colonel, colonel, or equivalent with approximately 18 to 20 years service, he or she was 42 years old, had command experience at battalion level or higher, was qualified in high level staff procedures, and possessed a master's degree (or was in the process of attaining one while attending USAWC). The majority of military students possessed Vietnam combat experience.<sup>3</sup> During this period, the Army had sufficient officers who met basic eligibility criteria to meet its objectives for SSS.

Twenty years later, the USAWC mission has adapted to the post Persian Gulf War realities of fiscal restraint by focusing its curriculum on joint operations doctrine. The mission today is to prepare selected military, civilian, and international leaders to assume strategic responsibilities in military and national security organizations; to educate students about the employment of the US Army as part of a unified, joint, or multinational force in support of the national military strategy; to research operational and strategic issues; and to conduct outreach programs that benefit USAWC, the US Army,

and the Nation.<sup>4</sup> The Army views SSS as a vehicle to groom senior leaders for high command and joint/combined/ interagency staffs and has targeted certain groups. This curriculum focus has shifted toward a joint approach and the eligibility criteria reflect the depth and breadth of experience needed to enhance the joint flavor of the curriculum. In accordance with the Department of the Army letter dated 7 September 1994, to attend USAWC, one must meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Currently serving as lieutenant colonel or colonel
2. Minimum 16 years active federal commissioned service
3. Maximum 23 years active federal commissioned service
4. Graduate of or credit for Command and Staff College
5. Not attended, declined attendance, nor disenrolled from Senior Service School
6. Not enrolled in, graduated from, or disenrolled from the Army War College Corresponding Studies Course since class 87-89.<sup>5</sup>

Other concerns with these eligibility criteria abound. First, the increase in minimum commissioned service indicates a desire for a more mature officer. Second, the Army competitively selects officers to take the correspondence course, and considers additional in-residence attendance a duplication of SSS. Third, the Army is concerned over promotion passover for lieutenant colonels in the resident program. During this past academic year, 22 Army lieutenant colonels in the Army War College were passed over for promotion to colonel

Change may be on the horizon. Although unofficial at this time, the Army has generated proposals to further refine admission criteria. While the current Army selection process may be criticized for not sufficiently screening lieutenant colonels, one argument suggests these officers are still viable contributors. The other argument suggests that professional military education in the senior ranks should favor individuals headed for senior leadership positions in the military. As a comparison, the Air Force views in-

residence PME as essential for senior leaders and the lesson here is the need to carefully review candidates during the selection process to avoid the passover phenomenon. To prevent passovers in school, Air Force policy stipulates not sending IPZ lieutenant colonels to SSS.<sup>6</sup>

So what sort of class does the Army criteria yield? The 1996 class looks something like this: 44 years old, 21 years of service, more than 75 percent have command experience at battalion level or higher (not unusual as their career paths dictate most will perform this duty at the captain level). Finally, over 75 percent have a Masters degree or higher.<sup>7</sup>

### **Naval War College**

The Naval War College's mission in 1989 was to "further an understanding of the fundamentals of warfare, international relations, and inter-service operations, in order to prepare officers for higher command."<sup>8</sup> To meet this requirement, the Navy selected members for attendance at a resident Senior Service College (SSC) by reconstituting a commander promotion board. Once the promotion board adjourned, the board reconvened to select the top 60 percent of the officers listed on the promotion list. The 60 percent were then placed in a large pool of eligibles. The 1989 selection list consisted of 600 new names for the eligible pool. At that time, the Navy selected approximately 185 from the pool each year to attend SSS.<sup>9</sup>

The Naval War College mission today is "to enhance the professional capabilities of its students to make sound decisions in command, staff, and management positions in naval, joint, and combined environments; to provide them with a sound understanding of

military strategy and operational art; and to instill in them joint attitudes and perspectives. The Naval War College shall serve as a center for research and gaming leading to the development of advanced strategic, warfighting, and campaign concepts for the future employment of maritime, joint, and combined forces.”<sup>10</sup> Current eligibility criteria is almost identical to what it was in 1989. In accordance with Navy Military Personnel Manual, Article #6620130:

1. The majority of service college selections will be made by promotion selection boards reconstituted as Service College Selection Boards. Selectees remain eligible for assignment for their entire time in grade.
2. Restricted line and staff corps officer (less Supply Corps) are nominated by their communities, based upon their performance and availability to attend during the next year.
3. Service college selection boards are charged to select the best qualified officers from among those eligible, regardless of their warfare specialties, or current assignments.
4. Officers in the grade of captain are considered as selectees to all senior service colleges.
5. Officers not selected by board action may request a service college administrative screen.
6. Assignment slating for new selectees occurs after the service college quota plan is issued for the fiscal year.<sup>11</sup>

With respect to SSS, Navy class composition is very similar to the Air Force—they too have a high representation of junior personnel. Makeup of class 95-96 is as follows: 85 percent of the class are lieutenant commanders and commanders; 15 percent are captains; and, unlike the Air Force, over 40 percent have held command or higher positions.<sup>12</sup>

### **Air War College**

Having examined the sister service schools, we'll now take a historical look at Air War College. Established in 1946, AWC had the following mission: “To prepare

selected officers for the employment of large Air Force units, to ensure the most effective development of the Army Air Force as a whole, and to consider the broad aspects of air power.”<sup>13</sup> The mission statement has changed over the years, and emphasis on “selected” versus “senior” officers has fluctuated back and forth. In 1961 the emphasis was on senior officers. In 1963 the college’s mission was to “supply instruction for selected officers for high command and staff duty.”<sup>14</sup> Today, the mission statement says, “we’re preparing senior officers to lead in the strategic environment emphasizing joint operations and the employment of air and space power in support of national security.”<sup>15</sup> Much as the Army has adjusted to the times, the Air Force has likewise structured the AWC mission to support the national military structure.

Concurrent with shifts in the mission statement, eligibility criteria for students to attend AWC metamorphosed over the years. For instance, in 1966 the Air Force used the eligibility criteria of 15 through 20 years of promotion list service in identifying eligible officers for SSS attendance. Additionally, the Air Force imposed a 44 year maximum age limit.<sup>16</sup> Today’s requirement in accordance with AFI 36-2301 lists the following:

1. Lieutenant Colonels (until considered In-the-Promotion Zone to colonel)
2. Colonels (attendance requires at least one Below-the-Promotion-Zone selection) with less than 23 years of commissioned service at graduation
3. Three years on station as of the projected departure date for school<sup>17</sup>

While the eligibility criteria and mission statements have changed in response to changing Air Force requirements, the basic selection philosophy has remained constant with regard to attendees: the best qualified officers must be selected for attendance. This study proposes the selection process pay closer attention to timing—when is the best time to send officers?—as well as continuing to consider only the best qualified officers.



Why the emphasis on timing? Air Force views related to the changing demographics of SSS attendees are presented later in this study. AWC classes are getting younger in terms of officer experience. Table 3-1 illustrates this point. Beginning with the AWC class of 1984, the table details the percentage grade breakout of each class. Using the class sizes from Table 2-1, the accompanying percentages show the presence of colonels and lieutenant colonels in each class.

**Table 3-1. Air War College Class Composition by Grade (AF)**

| <b>CLASS YR</b> | <b>84</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>87</b> | <b>88</b> | <b>89</b> | <b>90</b> | <b>91</b> | <b>92</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>95</b> |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Students        | 157       | 153       | 161       | 164       | 158       | 148       | 144       | 124       | 141       | 133       | 136       | 146       |
| % Colonels      | 40%       | 53%       | 50%       | 41%       | 49%       | 41%       | 19%       | 31%       | 31%       | 27%       | 12%       | 18%       |
| % Col-sel       | 7%        | 26%       | 25%       | 32%       | 15%       | 21%       | 25%       | 15%       | 44%       | 30%       | 13%       | 6%        |
| % Lt Col        | 53%       | 21%       | 25%       | 27%       | 36%       | 38%       | 56%       | 54%       | 25%       | 43%       | 75%       | 76%       |

**Source:** AF SSS Graduates (AFPC/DPSAS, Randolph AFB, Tx., 28 March 1996)

First, the colonel percentages represent pinned on colonels, whether at the start of the class or during the class. The colonel selects are those officers selected for colonel who did not pin on during the school year. This chart reveals a significant trend: the overall downward slide in pinned-on colonel representation at AWC. The data also indicate the colonel representation dropped markedly with the 1990 class. While colonel representation recovered slightly in 1991 and 1992, the drop in representation resumed and was at 18 percent for the 1995 AWC class.

**Table 3-2. SSS Colonel Representation Percentages (AF)**

| <b>CLASS YR</b> | <b>84</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>86</b> | <b>87</b> | <b>88</b> | <b>89</b> | <b>90</b> | <b>91</b> | <b>92</b> | <b>93</b> | <b>94</b> | <b>95</b> |
|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| NWC             | 60%       | 52%       | 61%       | 48%       | 53%       | 43%       | 29%       | 26%       | 43%       | 25%       | 31%       | 29%       |
| ICAF            | 51%       | 47%       | 48%       | 47%       | 56%       | 46%       | 17%       | 15%       | 47%       | 31%       | 13%       | 8%        |
| AWC             | 40%       | 53%       | 50%       | 41%       | 49%       | 41%       | 19%       | 31%       | 31%       | 27%       | 12%       | 18%       |

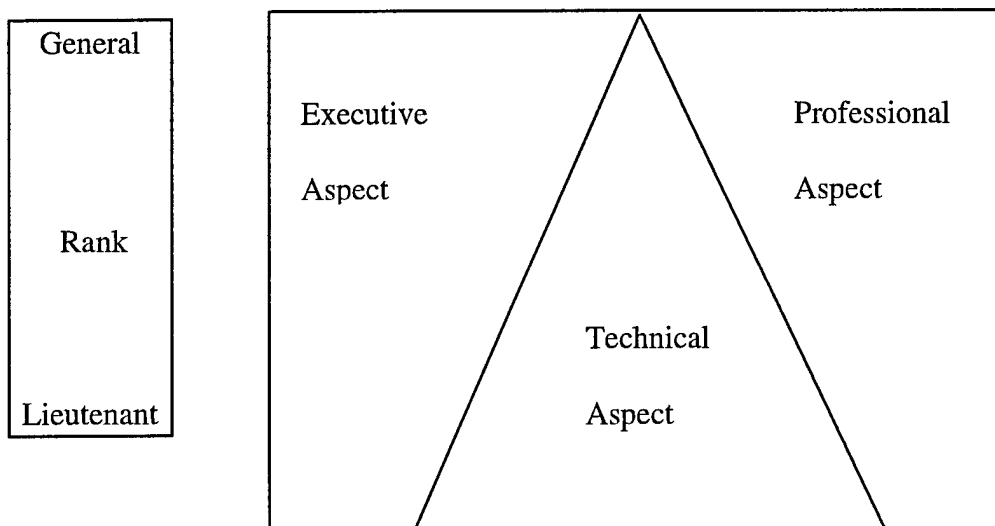
**Source:** AF SSS Graduates (AFPC/DPSAA, Randolph AFB, Tx., 28 March 1996)

AWC is not alone in the shift toward more junior class populations. Table 3-2 illustrates the downward trend in AF colonel representation at the NDU schools. Although the total AF class sizes are approximately one third of the average AWC class, the AF colonel representation at NDU is on the decline as shown by the data.

Attendance timing for AWC has a strong impact on officer professional development (OPD). A study conducted in 1980 looked at the Air Force's need for professional military education in the coming decade. This study addressed the necessary aspects of officer professionalism and the best ways to develop in the officer corps the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to ensure success in the military profession.

Several observations came out of this study, but a particularly practical tool, the Relative Officer Development Needs model, is useful today (Figure 3-1).

**Figure 3-1. Changing Officer Development Needs Model**



**Source:** "USAF Officer PME in the 1980s: A Look at the Air Force Need for Professional Military Education in the Coming Decade (Maxwell AFB, Ala., 1979).

This model suggests an officer's need for development in technical (encompasses the knowledge and skills required by the officer to meet the demands of his or her functional specialty), executive (includes the knowledge and skills required of the officer as a military leader, manager, and executive) and professional (includes the knowledge and attitudes required by the officer as a professional—discipline, dedication, motivation, ethics, etc.) officership aspects is not constant. Instead the development needs in each aspect change as rank increases. An officer's need for technical development generally overshadows his need for executive development at the lower ranks, while the situation is exactly reversed for more senior officers.<sup>18</sup>

Within the Air Force today, the Officer Career Path Guide is the professional development model for the 1990s. Not unlike the Changing Officer Development Needs Model, the Air Force Career Path Guide emphasizes that failure to build the foundation at the appropriate time may, in effect, close doors for advancement later in a career. The Career Path Guide provides more practical guidance than the earlier model by detailing

tangible career stepping stones for professional development. Further, the focus of the guide is not careerism and "square filling;" instead, the focus is on illustrating the need for a broad foundation of expertise as an officer increases in rank and associated responsibility.

Equipped with an extensive knowledge of how the Air Force operates internally, an in-resident PME officer can better understand the operations and structures of the other services and allied nations. Air University adheres to the following philosophy regarding PME, which fits into the officer career path guide and its recommendations: Squadron Officer School (SOS) develops officership, Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) develops commandership, and Air War College develops generalship.<sup>19</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Col Wayne C. Pittman, Jr., "Why PME? The Purpose of Professional Military Education," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1980), 20.

<sup>2</sup> Glenda Y. Nogami and Col Robert J. Davis, "Report on the Survey of USAWC Graduates from Academic Years 1983-1987," (Carlisle Barracks, PA.: Army War College, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Lt Col George E. Palmer, "A Discriminative Study of the Senior Service College Selection System as it Relates to the Army War College," (Carlisle Barracks, PA.: US Army War College, 1972), 29.

<sup>4</sup> US Army War College Curriculum Pamphlet, 1996, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Col Michael L. Leahy, Chief Functional Area Management and Development Division to PCS and Selected to PCS and Selected Commanders, letter, subject: FY 1994 Senior Service College Selection Board, AY 95/96, 7 September 1994.

<sup>6</sup> AFI 36-2301, *Professional Military Education*, 22 July 1994, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Col Daniel W. Palmer, letter, subject: USAWC Statistical Data AY 96, 27 July 1995.

<sup>8</sup> United States Naval War College, *Mission Statement*, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> Gen Carl E. Vuono, "The Military Education Level-One Study (MEL-1 Study)," 4 May 1990.

<sup>10</sup> United States Naval War College, *Mission Statement*, 1996.

## Notes

<sup>11</sup> Naval Personnel Manual, Article No. 6620130, *Naval Military Personnel Manual*, undated.

<sup>12</sup> Cdr Techol, United States Naval War College., telephone interview, 10 April 1996.

<sup>13</sup> Lt Cols A.T. Reid, V.W. Darnold, C.C. Gatchell, and G. C. Rademaker, "How Should the Requirements for Senior Professional Military Education be Determined to Assure Optimal Advantage to the United States Air Force?" (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1966), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>15</sup> Air War College, *Mission Statement*, 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Reid, Darnold, Gatchell, Rademaker, 10-11.

<sup>17</sup> AFI 36-2301, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Maj John M. Dorger., "USAF Officer PME in the 1980s: A Look at the Air Force Need for Professional Military Education in the Coming Decade," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air Command and Staff College, 1979), 31-33.

<sup>19</sup> Lt Gen Kelley comments during Air War College briefing, subject: "Student—Mission Match," 18 January 1996.

## **Chapter 4**

### **School Selection Board Procedures**

Heretofore, this study has focused on the selection criteria for in-residence SSS. A discussion of the school selection board process will demonstrate how the criteria are applied to school candidates. School candidates are all BPZ selects and those officers in the top 30 percent of their year groups based on the IPZ promotion results. We observed the described process during the 1995 ISS/SSS Selection Board held at AFPC in early December 1995. Conducted like a promotion board, board members score officer performance records. The selection board process begins with a detailed briefing giving background information, facts about the eligibles, and board operating procedures. Upon completion of the briefing, the board president reads the memorandum of instruction (Appendix A) to the selection board and board members take an oath reaffirming their commitment and integrity to perform their duties as board members.

The next stage of the board process is a trial run scoring of sample records. The trial run puts in practice the board briefing and helps board members review and score records with consistency. Board members consider the school candidate's record of performance and career desires as set forth in the AF Form 90, Officer Assignment Worksheet. The record of performance provides board members the means to evaluate "the whole person" factors in an officer's record. "Whole person" factors include performance, professional

competence, leadership, job responsibility, breadth of experience, specific achievements, and education. Thus, the record of performance enables board members to estimate officer potential. Once the trial run is completed, the board support staff briefs members on the results of their scoring and encourages discussion of those items relative to their score. The open discussion of the observed factors helps set a board standard and guides the scoring once review of actual records begins.

The board members begin scoring records when the trial run process is complete and members are comfortable with the board process. Separate panels of board members score records for ISS and SSS. When scoring is complete, the board rank orders the records and a cut line applied based on the number of school quotas available. This order of merit determines the attendees and alternates.

For the December board, the AFPC commander, Maj Gen Davitte, opened with welcoming remarks and general comments.<sup>1</sup> He raised several key points for board members to consider; in today's smaller Air Force, these points make sense in the overall utilization and management of a smaller officer corps. For example, he asked board members to note time on station for officers. Does it make sense to pull an officer out of a key position and deny him or her valuable experience by sending him or her to school, especially when the officer has remaining years of eligibility to attend SSS in-residence? Another key point was the elapsed time since attending ISS in-residence. Although not governed by statute, does it make sense that an officer who attended ISS within the past three years return to school so soon? Board members were asked to note whether an officer was nearing the end of his or her window of opportunity to attend SSS in-residence. Having learned the lesson which the Army has recently experienced, the Air

Force attempts to avoid sending lieutenant colonels who will be in the promotion zone to colonel.

Another key consideration addressed was the timing of an officer's attendance; e.g., had the officer met the "command test" before being selected to attend SSS? Supporting remarks focused on the awkwardness of sending lieutenant colonels too early to SSS before they had experience in certain key jobs. An interesting dichotomy arises. The Air Force selects officers for PME attendance based on the quality of their performance; however, some senior raters push for early PME attendance, perhaps undermining the job opportunities of the officers with the greatest potential. To resolve the problem, the Air Force needs to make a cultural change: earlier is not better when it comes to school attendance.

The school selection board only designated candidates for attendance and a subsequent board identified school of attendance. This is a change from previous boards and affords the assignment community the opportunity to match SSS programs to professional development for officers. Additional comments stated if a selected officer is unable to attend because of mission requirements, an operational deferment letter would be placed in the record. Moreover, most officers should have at least one year time on station and board members should pay close attention to those officers serving in joint positions, particularly those who have 22 months TOS. Board members also paid close attention to those officers in the 1979 year group, since some of them, particularly the BPZ promotees, would not pin on lieutenant colonel before the beginning of the school year. In support of the last comment, Maj Gen Davitte informed the board frocking



would be difficult to justify to support a lieutenant colonel-select attending SSS in-residence.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Maj Gen William B. Davitte, commander Air Force Personnel Center, address to the CY 95 Intermediate/Senior Service School Selection Board, Randolph AFB, TX, 4 December 1995.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Air Force Perspectives on Senior Service School**

This chapter will focus on the more practical aspects of how the policymakers, implementors, and users of the system view the Air Force process on selecting lieutenant colonels and colonels for SSS. To glean this information, the study group interviewed the policymakers, in this case, the Office of Colonel Matters (AF/DPO) and Directorate of Personnel Programs (AF/DPP); the implementors, AFPC; and the users, AWC. Their comments are paraphrased. Finally, to capture the essence of how the field views the selection process, the study group administered a survey to the Major Commands as well as the Joint commands.

#### **Headquarters Air Force**

The Office of Colonel Matters, manages the school selection/designation board as well as works the follow-on assignments for approximately 50 colonels and colonel selects. On 27 December 1995, the study group met with Colonel John Spiegel, Chief AF/DPO. The group asked the following questions: *Why does the Air Force send so few colonels and colonel selects to SSS? How does the Air Force manage its designation/selection process? Are there any aspects of colonel resource management that could perhaps affect when an individual goes to school?*

Colonel Spiegel's paraphrased remarks are as follows:

It's all a function of promotion boards. The boards determine how many people are selected as school candidates—this number tends to be small. It's very difficult to work the issue, without having the numbers to work with.

Major Commands are heavily involved in the selection/designation process and assignment of SSS graduates. First, we ask the MAJCOMs for an individual's school availability. Next, we ask them to tell us what school (ICAF, AWC, NWC, etc.) they should attend and briefly explain why. Finally, the process is complete when the MAJCOMs provide their input on the type of assignment following school (Appendix B).

To be competitive for brigadier general, we have five years to work with an up and coming colonel. Accordingly, we prefer to have folks who completed SSS early, thus giving us time to work colonels through the various "wickets"—one year for school, two years for joint, two years for command. The Command Screening Board is another issue that must be factored into the equation—this could definitely affect the already limited time constraints.

Colonel Spiegel closed by providing his insight into why so many junior lieutenant colonels are attending SSS: "as the system stands now, the folks that we select tend to be BPZers and the top 5 percent ... in most cases this happens to be junior personnel."<sup>1</sup>

Following the interview with Colonel Spiegel, the Study Group met with Major General Michael McGinty, then the Director of Personnel Programs, AF/DPP. The AF/DPP establishes policy, provides guidance, participates in programming funds, and oversees PME programs. The group asked General McGinty the following questions: *Why are so many junior lieutenant colonels attending SSS? Is there anything germane to*

*the system that forces us to send people early? How would he resolve this perceived problem?"*

General McGinty's paraphrased comments:

In previous conversations, I've learned there are 10 reasons why we have so many junior personnel attending SSS:

1. A smaller force with the same school size may cause earlier attendance.
2. Generally speaking, all colonels who are eligible and available to go to SSS in-residence do go. Lieutenant Colonels fill class seats only when they're not filled with colonels or colonel selects.
3. By policy, on-time colonels aren't eligible to attend SSS.
4. Many lieutenant colonels were selected below-the-zone for promotion to major and/or lieutenant colonel. Others may also have been selected early for colonel and may attend SSS before they pin on.
5. Having a colonel board every calendar year, even if a new list isn't needed immediately, causes the number of selectees awaiting pin-on to grow. This increases the likelihood that they will attend SSS as lieutenant colonels.
6. By policy, lieutenant colonels cannot attend SSS when they're in the primary zone.
7. The window to attend school as a lieutenant colonel is small.
8. It may be that the new lieutenant colonel/colonel career paths emphasizing "command test" prior to attending school aren't being followed. It would be worth knowing the proportion of officers who attended SSS in-residence who actually had a command opportunity as lieutenant colonels before they became eligible for colonel IPZ.
9. There is a perception that a lieutenant colonel's attendance at SSS is important for promotion to colonel.
10. There may be a perception that the earlier a lieutenant colonel attends SSS, the better it looks.

In managing promotable colonels, we're working with a window of opportunity that goes from 21-26 for promotion to flag officer—like any other bell curve, very few are selected to brigadier general in their 21-22 or 25-26 years of service. Hence, most move into promotable positions around the 23-24 years of service and are at least three years BPZ. The system still has to allow for completion of ACSC, joint, and command with

the operational world it's a different ballgame (e.g., gate time and command opportunities available later in the rated officer's career).

Another issue that must be factored in is, how long after completion of Senior Service School do folks stay in the Air Force? I believe we need to look at the pros and cons of this. I'm inclined to believe that many colonels retire directly after completing Senior Service School. In the big scheme of things, you would never promote someone to Brigadier General who has just completed Senior Service School.

The Command Selection Boards will also put a different slant on the process. When folks find out that they're not competitive for command, the key question will be, how motivated will they be to attend Senior Service School?

If I were looking at the system, and trying to come up with ways to improve the process, I would draw a line and look at the factors that affect an individual's opportunity to go to school, basically driven by requirements and timing. By conducting this analysis you probably could derive a good way to implement possible changes to the current process.<sup>2</sup>

Gen McGinty sent the following comments after the initial meeting:

As a historical note, during the time when the selection of school candidates was uncoupled from the promotion process, the MAJCOMs began to nominate candidates later and later in their window of eligibility, and the designation boards tended to select them as well. This caused the SSS "phase point" to drift to the right. In turn, larger numbers of lieutenant colonel tended to be in school when their IPZ colonel board met. It became embarrassing when significant numbers of these officers were not selected for promotion. On the July 1990 colonel board, for example, 12 students were passed over.

Largely because of this, the selection of school was recoupled with the promotion process, and the policy was adopted that prevents lieutenant colonels from attending SSS when they're IPZ for colonel.<sup>3</sup>

### **Air Force Personnel Center**

AFPC is responsible for implementing PME policy established by the Air Staff. On 4 December 1995, one member of the study group met with the PME Management Branch, AFPC/DPAJE, and AFPC/CV to discern their views on the selection process. AFPC/DPAJE provided the team with earlier studies conducted on the PME process. They also provided a current copy of the instruction that governs the PME selection process (AFI 36-2301, 22 July 1994). DPAJE informed the team that for this upcoming year, AF/DPO only requested 85 of the 308 SSS slots.<sup>4</sup> They suggested further contact with AF/DPO would unveil the reason for such small numbers.

Immediately following the meeting with the PME Management Branch, the team member met with the AFPC/CV, the initial sponsor of this project. AFPC/CV raised several items of interest—foremost was the contention that colonels have met the tough criteria for success in the eyes of the Air Force, and more of them should be allowed to attend in-residence PME, despite not having been promoted BPZ at any time. Lieutenant colonels generally do not have the breadth of experience to take full advantage of the SSS curriculum. The Air Force will have lieutenant colonels designated for school who have not pinned on before attendance. This phenomenon affects the 1979 year group (especially BPZ) and will undoubtedly affect the 1980 year group. The timing may be right to effect a slowdown of junior TIG lieutenant colonels attending SSS in-residence

and begin a shift to a more senior student body. This shift benefits these officers, their classmates, and the Air Force by yielding a better return on the SSS investment.

### **Air War College**

We captured Air War College views during the various meetings with the senior staff. AWC expressed grave concern about the increasing number of lieutenant colonels attending SSS. The following issues arose in a briefing given to AETC/CC, AF/DP, and AFPC/CC: "Over the past four years, the number of line colonels on opening day of AWC has dropped from an average of slightly over 40, for the classes of 1984-1988, to less than 10 for the classes of 1993-1996. At graduation the number of line colonels or colonel selects has dropped from 80 in 1986 to less than 30 for 1996."<sup>5</sup> Moreover, not only have they seen an increase in lieutenant colonels, but of the lieutenant colonels who are attending, AWC has seen a marked decline in time in grade (TIG). "Time in grade as a lieutenant colonel has also been decreasing over the past few years. The number of line lieutenant colonels with less than eight months time in grade on the first day of class has risen from 8 for the 1993 class to 20 for the 1996 class. For the class of 1997, several lieutenant colonel selects have been chosen to attend AWC and will still not have pinned on lieutenant colonel by class start date, giving the possibility of the need to frock these individuals."<sup>6</sup>

Another AWC concern is the amount of time between Intermediate Service School (ISS) graduation and AWC attendance. According to the Commandant of Air War College, "this time between PME attendance is seen as a valuable time to put into use tools acquired at ISS to garner experiences useful in the more senior levels. If enough

time between school attendance is not afforded the officer, valuable learning may be missed.”<sup>7</sup> Again, looking at the data collected by AWC, the number of AWC attendees with 2 and 3 years between ISS and AWC attendance has risen significantly over the past three years. With only two years between schools, the numbers have gone from 2 in the 1994 class to 14 in the 1996 class. Those with only 3 years have jumped from 9 in the 1994 class to 23 in the 1996 class.<sup>8</sup> Junior lieutenant colonels have not had ample time to complete the squadron commander type jobs and should not attend SSS.

Air War College believes there is no mechanism in place to manage or “hand massage” the follow-on assignment for these lieutenant colonels. Many are preoccupied with “job-hunting,” ultimately distracting from their overall contribution to the program. More importantly, investigation into the job levels AWC graduates go to out of school reveals that more AWC graduates are going to non-senior level positions than in the past.<sup>9</sup> A more junior AWC graduating class contributes to this phenomenon. They may not be eligible for many of the senior level positions because they lack the rank, time in grade, or time in service, or they may not have filled experience/training prerequisites. This trend highlights the question on the timeliness and usefulness of early attendance at AWC.

The validity of the AWC mission may be part of the question. Are the AWC strategic focus and junior class population congruent? Should AWC adjust its mission to accommodate the population or should the status quo be maintained? AWC believes the curriculum is properly focused—at the strategic/generalship level and that incoming students must “first successfully pass the commandership test. Then they are ready to



study and absorb at the 'Generalship' level—hence a need for higher USAF AWC 'experienced-based' admission criteria.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Views from the Field**

Up to this point, the primary discussion on the timing of attendance to SSS focused on the institutional views of the Air Force. The study group developed a survey (Appendix C) to derive a more revealing look at the perceptions of SSS attendance timing and to determine whether there exist any trends in nominating school candidates for school selection. The group developed the survey instrument in concert with the Air Force Survey Branch located within the Air Force Personnel Center. The instrument presented ten questions regarding methodology, timing philosophy, expected gain from SSS attendance, and reasons candidates were nominated for attendance selection. Each of the ten major command deputies for personnel and nine joint command J-1s received the survey instrument. Of these nineteen surveys, sixteen were returned, many with several pages of comments. The survey questions are described individually with a look at how the commands responded.<sup>11</sup>

**Question 1.** Does your MAJCOM have a formal policy on nominating school candidates to the central school selection board? If so, please describe.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_ Don't Know\_\_\_\_\_

Question 1 rationale was to determine whether there existed some formal policy within each of the commands and set the tone for the answers to subsequent questions. Of the sixteen responses received, eleven of the commands indicated they had some formal policy for candidate nomination. Some commands indicated the policy was to

make all candidates available, while others indicated they relied on senior rater recommendation. Inherent in some of the policies was the role of a command screening board to review those candidates nominated for school attendance. While five of the commands indicated having no formal policy, one comment from this group stated the command reviews the whole person in determining which candidates to nominate for school. The responses show to some degree all the commands review those candidates nominated for school attendance.

**Question 2.** Please rank order the factors below based on how they are considered when nominating school candidates within your MAJCOM. The number 1 is the most important factor.

|                             |                                       |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Time on Station_____        | Officer Professional Development_____ |
| Duty Performance_____       | Level of Assignment_____              |
| Other (please specify)_____ |                                       |

This question focused on whole person factors considered when nominating candidates for SSS attendance. Respondents rank ordered each factor in relative importance. The one factor listed as most important was duty performance. Duty performance, as documented in performance reports, was the one item from which an officer's potential could be discerned. Senior raters used duty performance as an indicator of future performance just as promotion boards view duty performance as one of the most important factors in determining which officers are selected for promotion.

Officer professional development (OPD) placed second. Comments regarding OPD indicate some concern about SSS timing for school candidates. While some commands looked at timing with regard to career development, others viewed timing as a race to get

their candidates to school as soon as possible (reflected in responses to subsequent questions). OPD provides a road map to officers for their personal professional development. The questions following were designed to isolate some of the command specifics of the timing process.

The last two specific factors were level of assignment and time on station. While roughly equivalent in their overall rankings, both were downplayed in overall importance. However, time on station is very important as revealed in later questions. In fact, the impression given is that if an officer closely approximates his peers in other areas of OPD, time on station becomes the key in nominating an officer for school selection. Just how close an officer approximates peers in OPD is the reason for question three. Overall, question two gives a good broad-brush view of what the commands consider for SSS nomination. The personnel community efforts on OPD and the heightened increase in promotion awareness appear to have influenced senior leadership to take more responsibility in mentoring, guiding, or counseling their officers.

**Question 3.** If an officer's professional development is considered in the MAJCOM school nomination process, what professional development factors do you look for? (Please rank order.)

Joint tour completion\_\_\_\_\_

Staff tour completion\_\_\_\_\_

Command tour\_\_\_\_\_

In-residence ISS\_\_\_\_\_

BPZ promotion\_\_\_\_\_

Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Question three attempted to narrow down those OPD factors considered in the context of professional development. Eleven responses placed command tour completion as one of the top three factors in determining school nomination, while four responses

placed command tour completion at or near the bottom of the rank order. The remaining response stated no specific factors were considered or briefed to senior raters and all candidates were considered equally qualified to attend SSS. The preponderance of responses held command tour completion high in the nomination consideration, but not all held the same view.

The second factor given great weight in the nomination process is BPZ promotion. Ten of the responses weighted this factor in the top three for nomination. This ranking implies that senior raters place great weight on early promotion decisions to further validate an officer's potential. Again the spread of rankings indicates this factor as well as others is not viewed in isolation, but overall as part of the entire officer whole person look.

The other three factors received mixed placement on the priority scale. Five respondents ranked joint tour completion in the top three, while the other eleven rated joint near the bottom of factors considered, or relegated it to the overall whole person concept. Half of the respondents rated generic staff tour completion in the top three factors, but again the sense may be that staff completion is another of the overall whole person factors. Similarly, in-residence ISS completion garnered half of the respondents' top three rankings, while the others considered ISS as one of the whole person factors. The point from these factor rankings is that senior raters are considering the whole person in determining whom to nominate to SSS. Aside from the previous two factors, BPZ promotion and command tour completion, these other factors are seen as contributors to OPD.

**Question 4.** What is your MAJCOM policy on submitting BPZ officers to the school selection board?

As soon as possible (Lt Col)\_\_\_\_\_ Reasonable TOS (1, 2, or 3 yrs)\_\_\_\_\_

As soon as possible (Col)\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Question three results showed that early promotion was a prime OPD consideration in nominating officers for school selection. Understanding the weight given to BPZ selection, and the fact that BPZ officers are school candidates, question four seeks to determine if MAJCOMs hold BPZ officers in their current duties to tour completion or submit them for school as soon as possible. Twelve of the command responses indicated that completion of tour (usually two years) takes precedence over nominating an individual to attend school as soon as possible. The key qualifier in the comments was whether an individual was ready to attend SSS, e.g., had the officer completed a command tour, joint tour, or staff tour. The comments indicated that in-residence school attendance is important; but, should eligibility remain for an officer, the officer should complete the current duty tour. The other four responses focused on the other extreme: send BPZ officers as soon as possible. Two responses explicitly advocated sending BPZ colonels as soon as possible, given a reasonable completion of tour (two years). The other two responses of these four advocated sending lieutenant colonels and colonels as soon as possible, without comment. In summary, the majority of the responses indicate that while it is advantageous for BPZ officers to attend SSS in-residence, the preferable option is to nominate these officers at the conclusion of a tour, allowing proper professional development.

**Question 5.** When is the right time for SSS attendance for officers?

As soon as possible (Lt Col)\_\_\_\_\_ Reasonable TOS (1, 2, or 3 yrs)\_\_\_\_\_

As soon as possible (Col)\_\_\_\_\_ Other (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_

Removing the BPZ qualifier, question five applied to all school candidates. While the majority of respondents (nine) still felt that lieutenant colonels and colonels should complete professionally developing assignments with reasonable TOS, seven of the respondents indicated that, on the whole, lieutenant colonels and colonels should be nominated for SSS attendance as soon as possible. As soon as possible respondents gave no reason for this shift and one reason may be the inclusion of non-BPZ officers into the pool of school candidates. The OPD-oriented commands noted several key reasons for TOS-based nomination decisions: completion of assignment test, demonstrated competency as a lieutenant colonel, completion of a commander tour, and how SSS fits into an officer's professional development.

**Question 6.** What benefit does your MAJCOM perceive through in-residence SSS attendance?

This question focused on two aspects of in-residence SSS attendance. The first aspect was what did the MAJCOM hope to gain from nominating and subsequently sending its officers to in-residence SSS. Two of the respondents noted limited benefits from sending their officers, specifically from a manning standpoint. However, thirteen commands focused on the benefits to the Air Force and the joint community. Comments noted graduates were "better educated, more balanced," prepared to "assume significant command/joint leadership positions," total force aware; had improved their strategic thinking skills; developed national security thought processes; and possessed "a big plus

in officer professional development.” The final respondent answered from a different perspective: “because of the low percentage of lieutenant colonel and lieutenant colonel selects who are allowed to attend SSS in-residence, we believe it significantly enhances their promotion potential to colonel, and of course, assignment into a joint command billet.” The second thought behind question six was to determine whether or not commands were nominating officers for SSS attendance to enhance promotion potential to colonel. The survey results seem to indicate the commands are more interested in the demonstrated performance of individual officers and the means for developing officer potential to the higher levels afforded from in-residence SSS.

**Question 7.** Does your MAJCOM prioritize the various senior service schools? Please rank order.

National War College\_\_\_\_\_

Air War College\_\_\_\_\_

ICAF\_\_\_\_\_

Army War College\_\_\_\_\_

Naval War College\_\_\_\_\_

Foreign SSS\_\_\_\_\_

Professional/Industry\_\_\_\_\_

Other\_\_\_\_\_

Question seven again aligned the respondent commands into two distinct camps. The question sought to determine whether commands preferred the NDU schools over Air War College. Eleven responses stated there was no priority among the various schools which officers could attend. These commands remarked that senior raters and nominees determine the preferred SSS program based on officer professional development and career enhancement. Commands may guide officers to NDU schools for JPME II reasons, ICAF for logisticians, and the other schools if an officer possesses the necessary background for the curriculum. For these commands, there was no rank ordering of the

schools. The other five commands indicated otherwise. Schools were rank ordered with the NDU schools and Air War College garnering the highest ranks. The foreign and professional/industry programs were ranked lowest. Comments of note indicated the NDU schools were ranked higher for those officers requiring joint education and follow-on joint tours. The question responses appeared to diminish the perception that the “best and brightest” officers are pushed to attend the NDU schools at the expense of any other SSS program. There was no indication of any institutionalized decision logic, other than on case-by-case professional development needs, which pushes officers to attend one school or another.

**Question 8.** Regarding the preceding questions, does your MAJCOM default to the school selection board at AFPC as the final “reality” check in officer development for school selection?

While the AFPC hosts and supports the selection boards (separate boards for lieutenant colonels and colonel nominees), AFPC does not control the scoring of records. The board is an autonomous group instructed and charged by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Five commands replied affirmatively to relying on the process as the final check in school selection. Five other commands replied affirmatively qualifying their answer with the additional importance of senior rater input via the Form 90. Collectively, these commands acknowledged the board process as final determination of school selects. The remaining six commands believed the senior rater and command support for officers is the final check. This question measured command perceptions of their involvement. In reality, the recommendations of senior raters have significant impact and send a clear message to board members that the officer is ready for SSS attendance.



**Question 9.** Do you see a need to standardize the school nomination process MAJCOM-wide?

Question nine sought to determine any perceptions of disparity in the entire nomination and selection process for SSS. Periodically, perceptions arise that some of the commands are better at getting their school candidates selected for SSS than others. In the responses, the overwhelming majority were content to allow the current process to continue. Reasons given included the reliance on senior rater recommendations and timing decisions and the acceptance of the centralized board process. Senior rater input keeps the nomination decision process with the commands and allows those who know the officers best to tell the board through the written recommendation on the Form 90. Two commands felt the nomination process should be standardized. One reason given was to "level the playing field" through consistent nomination procedures across the commands. However, the majority prefer to retain the decision within their commands.

**Question 10.** Do you have any comments or recommendations regarding the nomination/selection process for in-residence SSS?

1. "After initial availability cut by commander, should be best qualified."
2. "The designation process needs to be looked at to ensure command equity regarding NDU assignments."
3. "Expand the number/percentage of officers who are selected for SSS."
4. "Ensure operators are well represented."
5. "No 'young' Lt Cols."
6. "Ensure the 'right' senior person is the class president at AWC—it's important."
7. "Believe a good mix of Lt Cols & Cols for crossflow of information is 'important.'"
8. "Important to standardize across the USAF."
9. "There should be an even distribution of colonels and lieutenant colonels in SSS. Also, an individual selected BPZ to colonel (one year early) should have an opportunity to attend."
10. "Works well as far as I'm concerned."

11. "Time in between PME resident attendance needs to be kept to 3 years—should not fall back to 2."
12. "O-6/O-6(s) system works."
13. "My perception is that MAJCOMs have very little influence on their officers getting selected for attendance. SSS board selection is tightly controlled by AFPC. Sometimes I'm not sure why they even bother to ask MAJCOMs for nominations."
14. "Good job being done."

The preceding comments and recommendations were given in response to question ten and are presented in their entirety.<sup>12</sup> The comments support some of the concerns for which this study was commissioned.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Col John Spiegel, interviewed by 96-202 Study Group during visit to HQ USAF/DP, Pentagon, 27 December 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Maj Gen Michael McGinty, interviewed by 96-202 Study Group during visit to HQ USAF/DP, Pentagon, 27 December 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Maj Gen Michael McGinty, Memorandum to 96-202 Study Group, subject: Lieutenant Colonels Attending Senior Service School, 22 January 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum of Instructions, USAF Selection Board Secretariat, subject: CY 95 Intermediate/Senior Service School Selection Board, 4 December 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Briefing, Air War College, subject: "Student—Mission Match," 18 January 1996.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Majs Dennis J. DeGraff and Francine Blackmon, memorandum for record, subject: Air War College Timing, 18 January 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Briefing, Air War College, subject: "Student—Mission Match," 18 January 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Survey Responses, "ACSC Research Project Survey, "5 December 1995. USAF Survey Control Number 96-21, expiring 1 August 1996. Mr. Hamilton, Chief, Air Force Survey Branch, aided in development of this survey instrument.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Recommendations and Conclusions**

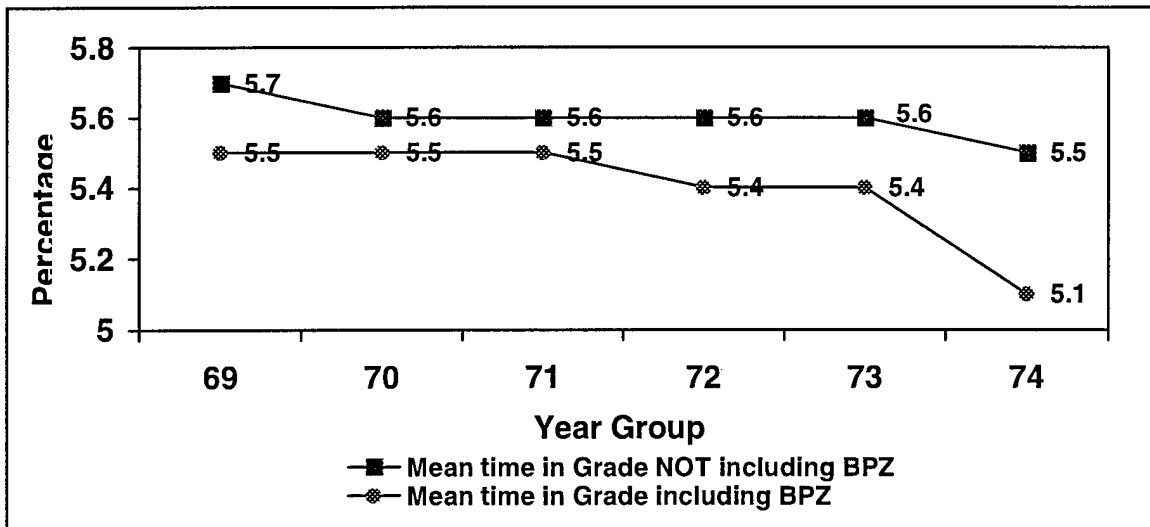
We live in an environment where the system rewards our brightest by sending them “early” to PME—in this case SSS. Mitigating against sending officers “early” is the reality that AWC is designed for a specific purpose: “to prepare senior officers to lead in a strategic environment.”<sup>1</sup> The educators at AWC find that many students are unable to benefit from the curriculum because the Air Force as a system is sending students who are neither adequately prepared for, nor able to capitalize on, what they’ve just learned. Why? Many students, having no command or leadership experience, are assigned upon graduation to the very jobs emphasizing commandership which they should have completed prior to attendance. Although the curriculum emphasizes strategic concepts and fosters generalship, the graduates are unable to employ their new learning. To resolve this dilemma, we propose four recommendations.

The first recommendation focuses on modifying the window of eligibility for lieutenant colonels. The second recommendation entails removing the BPZ and top 30 percent order of merit application for colonels, thereby making all BPZ and IPZ colonels eligible for school attendance. The third recommendation proposes establishment of a commissioned years of service criteria. The final recommendation involves reducing the number of SSS slots. Let’s look first at modifying the window of eligibility.

The first recommendation proposes decoupling the window of eligibility for school attendance from promotions. Two options may accomplish this recommendation. First, a lieutenant colonel school candidate should have 6 years of eligibility to attend SSS in-residence. Two benefits result from extending eligibility to 6 years. The candidate has time to “age” and gains through assignments the experience necessary to benefit from the SSS curriculum. Because there are six years of eligibility, there should be no rush to attend SSS without the right experience. Second, the Air Force community receives a clear message that SSS is not a necessity for promotion to colonel. This recommendation also aligns the AWC curriculum with the customer. Air War College would agree with this premise, since the school considers its mission appropriately focused at the strategic and generalship level. In a briefing presented to AETC/CC, AF/DP, and AFPC/CC, the AWC Commandant stated “to maximize this educational experience, students must first successfully pass the Commandership test—they’re then ready to study and absorb at the ‘Generalship level’”<sup>2</sup>—hence, support for an “experience based” admission criteria. Successfully implementing this recommendation would require a concerted effort from the MAJCOMs and the personnel community to make it work. As the “sanity check,” they would ensure properly “experienced” officers attend SSS at the right time.

The second option to implement decoupling the eligibility window from promotions is to require two years TIG for lieutenant colonels before SSS attendance. Table 6-1 shows the average TIG for lieutenant colonels decreasing before promotion to colonel.<sup>3</sup> The data show a gradual TIG decrease for IPZ officers and a more pronounced

**Table 6-1. Mean Time in Grade as O-5 (AF)**



**Source:** Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates (AFPC/DPSAA, Randolph AFB, TX, 7 December 1997) decrease for BPZ officers. Affording BPZ officers a two year TIG sanctuary allows these officers to grow in experience with their peers.

The 1979 and 1980 year groups offer a look at how this option would work. The 1979 year group is currently pinning lieutenant colonels and the list is forecast to exhaust January 1997.<sup>4</sup> The schedule means the BPZ officers in the 1979 year group will not pin on until December 1996-January 1997, five to six months after the start of the 1997 SSS academic year. Some of the top 30 percent order of merit candidates will also pin on after the academic year has started.

As of this writing, ten lieutenant colonel selects will not be pinned on by the academic year start and will be frocked to attend SSS beginning in August 1996.<sup>5</sup> The same situation occurs for the 1980 year group. The 1980 promotion list is scheduled to begin February 1997 and exhaust March 1998.<sup>6</sup> Again, some of the 30 percent order of merit candidates and all of the BPZ selects will not have pinned on by the start of the 1998 academic year.

A TIG requirement avoids the awkward justification for frocking officers to attend SSS. This option forces aging and offers lieutenant colonels two years to fill command and leadership positions. Further, the option reduces pressure to attend SSS and focuses on professional development. Subsequent school selection boards will be better able to gauge the whole person professional development of lieutenant colonels.

This recommendation with either option requires clarification in two areas. In the promotion zone lieutenant colonels would continue to be exempt from in-residence attendance during the IPZ year. Once selected for colonel, their management would fall to AF/DPO. The order of merit candidate status would carry over after selection to colonel.

Considering the fact that selection to colonel for SSS graduates is nearly 100 percent, this new policy would undermine the perception that SSS attendance is a prerequisite for selection to colonel. Certainly, in-residence SSS will continue to be a strong factor in promotion consideration, but promotion consideration now focuses on the whole person review because a fair percentage of lieutenant colonel candidates will not have attended SSS by the time of their IPZ board. This leads to our second recommendation—removing the BPZ and top 30 percent order of merit for colonels, thereby making all BPZ and IPZ colonels eligible for school attendance.

The stated mission of Air War College is to prepare senior officers for high command and staff duty. Officers in the grade of colonel certainly fulfill the criteria of being a “senior officer,” more so than officers in the grade of lieutenant colonel. Moreover, officers in the grade of colonel, and particularly those promoted to colonel IPZ, are likely to fill “high command and staff positions” for which AWC prepares

officers. It seems incongruent that a promising group of officers are eliminated from SSS eligibility after reaching a grade which is usually attained only through sustained superior performance.

To demonstrate the magnitude of the order of merit candidate process, let's review the 92 through 95 colonel selection boards. Of those officers selected for promotion to colonel IPZ for the 92 board, 385 of 535 (72%) selected had no previous BPZ promotion; for the 93 board, 353 of 458 (77%) had no prior BPZ promotion; for the 94 board, 410 of 548 (75%) had no prior BPZ promotion; and for the 95 board, 382 of 502 (76%) had no previous BPZ promotion.<sup>7</sup> Subtracting the selects who were SSS graduates leaves a cumulative total of 1274 colonel selects without in-residence SSS and any BPZ promotion. Applying the 30 percent order of merit to the 1274 means 891 colonel selects are not eligible to attend SSS. Mirroring the Navy, the Air Force should allow all colonels the opportunity to attend SSS, ensuring the timely education of a group likely to serve at higher level responsibilities.

A corollary gain would be the elevation of the prestige factor of AWC, since colonels would attend on a scale on par with the sister services. Colonels should have the experience vital to fulfilling AWC curriculum goals. Further, these colonels will provide retainability equal to or greater than many of the lieutenant colonels currently attending the schools. In fact, an examination of colonel retention rates for the 1965-74 year groups shows 65 percent of colonels make it through to year 26, regardless of SSS attendance.<sup>8</sup>

The first two recommendations involve revising existing provisions of AFI 36-2301. Our third recommendation introduces a different approach to aging lieutenant colonel SSS candidates by setting a commissioned years of service minimum for SSS attendance.

Let's say hypothetically we establish a minimum commissioned Years of Service (YOS) requirement of 18 years of commissioned service. Applying this minimum years of service ages the school eligible population and eliminates the urgency for officers to go "early," ultimately allowing them to complete the experience "gates" necessary for success at the higher grades.

This recommendation also addresses some of the concerns of the Air Staff as well as AWC. First, AWC has seen a rapid rise in the number of officers attending SSS after only one PCS assignment between ISS and SSS.<sup>9</sup> This recommendation allows individuals to have at least two PCS assignments between schools. The intent of an additional assignment is to grow the officer and ensure he or she has had the opportunity to acquire the desired experience for SSS attendance.

Second, as noted earlier, AF/DPO is responsible for colonel management. In this capacity, one of their pivotal jobs is ensuring potential general officer candidates have met certain requirements, e.g., joint requirements and, in most cases, "passed the command test."<sup>10</sup> By creating a YOS date that's closer to when an individual nears the rank of senior lieutenant colonel or junior colonel, many officers will have had the opportunity to meet these requirements. A system patterned after AF/DPO which would centrally manage lieutenant colonel SSS graduates, providing assignments commensurate with their rank and potential, is certainly logical. Such a system would assist our "up and coming" senior lieutenant colonels.

Realizing there will be times when an officer will be unable to meet the YOS requirement, waivers should be allowed for extenuating circumstances. As is the case today, waiver requests can be accomplished on a case by case basis.



The final recommendation involves reducing the number of SSS slots. Although the force has been downsized, class size at SSS has remained stable. The premise is that with fewer slots, the system would be inclined to send colonel and senior lieutenant colonels, thereby ensuring the most senior personnel attend. Moreover, adoption of this recommendation is fiscally prudent and would not require any change to current policy.

These recommendations are intended to streamline the existing SSS selection process allowing the Air Force to tap into a valuable experienced resource. If implemented, previously excluded colonels (no previous BPZ) will now have the opportunity to attend SSS. The expanded window for lieutenant colonels reduces the perceived need to attend SSS as early as possible to be promoted to colonel.

“The curriculum of the Air War College has attempted to keep pace with the ever-changing times. When the College was founded in 1946, curriculum objective was to preserve the lessons learned in World War II. Leaders with vast experience in the field came together to share their knowledge with others and to gain expertise in related areas. The mission statement of 1946 placed the emphasis on the employment of large air power. This basic objective remains, but the philosophy on how to reach the objective has changed throughout the years.”<sup>11</sup> For the Air Force to continue its dominant role as a leading aerospace power, we must equip our senior leaders with the necessary “tools,” strategic vision, and global awareness to meet the challenge of this ever-changing environment.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Briefing, Air War College, subject: "Student—Mission Match," 18 January 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Promotion Rate Data to Colonel for SSS Graduates, 1984-95, AFPC/DPSAA, 7 December 1995.

<sup>4</sup> Briefing, Air Force Personnel Center, subject: "Officer Promotions Outlook," 4 August 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Maj Lovelady, Air Force Personnel Center, telephone interview, 22 March 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Briefing, Air Force Personnel Center, subject: "Officer Promotions Outlook," 4 August 1995.

<sup>7</sup> Promotion Rates by Previous BPZ and SSS In-Resident Attendance, AFPC/DPSAA, 24 March 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Retention Rates for Colonels, AFPC/DPSAA, 18 January 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Briefing, Air War College, subject: "Student—Mission Match," 18 January 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Col John Spiegel, interviewed by 96-202 Study Group during visit to HQ USAF/DP, Pentagon, 27 December 1995.

<sup>11</sup> Lt Cols V.W. Darnold, C.C. Gatchell, G.C. Rademaker, and A.T. Reid, "How should the Requirements for Senior Professional Military Education be Determined to Assure Optimum Advantage to the United States Air Force," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1966), 16-17.

## **Appendix A**

### **Memorandum of Instruction**

*[Not available.]*

## **Appendix B**

### **HQ AF/DPOB Letter**

*[Not available.]*

## Appendix C

### ACSC Research Project Survey

#### Survey

The purpose of these questions is to determine what processes/logic are used by MAJCOMs in nominating officers to the senior service school (SSS) selection board. Survey responses will be used as support data in an AFPC-sponsored Air Command and Staff College research project investigating the timing of attendance to SSS. Survey results will not reflect command identity and will be used to identify Air Force trends in sending officers to SSS. Please return survey results to Air Command and Staff College, Seminar 5, Attn: Maj DeGraff, 225 Chennault Circle, Maxwell AFB, Alabama 36112. Results would be appreciated NLT 15 Jan 96.

1. Does your MAJCOM have a formal policy on nominating school candidates to the central school selection board? If so, please describe. Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Don't Know\_\_\_

2. Please rank order the factors below based on how they are considered when nominating school candidates within your MAJCOM. The number 1 is the most important factor.

|                                  |     |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Time on station                  | ___ |
| Officer professional development | ___ |
| Duty performance                 | ___ |
| Level of assignment              | ___ |
| Other (please specify)           | ___ |

3. If an officer's professional development is considered in the MAJCOM school nomination process, what professional development factors do you look for? (please rank order)

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| Joint tour completion  | ___ |
| Staff tour completion  | ___ |
| Command tour           | ___ |
| In residence ISS       | ___ |
| BPZ promotion          | ___ |
| Other (please specify) | ___ |

4. What is your MAJCOM policy on submitting BPZ officers to the school selection board?

As soon as possible (Lt Col) \_\_\_\_\_  
As soon as possible (Col) \_\_\_\_\_  
Reasonable TOS (1,2, or 3 yrs) \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

5. When is the right time for SSS attendance for officers?

As soon as possible (Lt Col) \_\_\_\_\_  
As soon as possible (Col) \_\_\_\_\_  
Reasonable TOS (1,2, or 3 yrs) \_\_\_\_\_  
Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

6. What benefit does your MAJCOM perceive through in residence SSS attendance?

7. Does your MAJCOM prioritize the various senior service schools? Please rank order.

National War College \_\_\_\_\_  
Air War College \_\_\_\_\_  
ICAF \_\_\_\_\_  
Army War College \_\_\_\_\_  
Naval War College \_\_\_\_\_  
Foreign SSS \_\_\_\_\_  
Professional/industry \_\_\_\_\_  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. Regarding the preceding questions, does your MAJCOM default to the school selection board at AFPC as the final "reality" check in officer development for school selection?

9. Do you see a need to standardize the school nomination process MAJCOM-wide?

10. Do you have any comments or recommendations regarding the nomination/selection process for in residence SSS?

Thank you for your participation in this survey.

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